

LETTER

TO A

Young Divine

Containing some

BRIEF DIRECTIONS

FOR

Composing and Delivering

OF

SERMONS.

By J. P. Presbyter of the Church
of *England*.

L O N D O N,

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A

LETTER

FROM

TO

DATE

BY

OF

AT

A

LETTER

TO

A Young Divine, &c.

S I R,

THough your desires are always very influential on me, and I have never been willing to deny you any thing, wherein I might be serviceable to you; yet as to your last Request, of giving you Directions--- *De concionibus formandis*---were it not more to shew my Affection than my Skill, I should have begg'd your pardon in this matter. And instead thereof, I should have turn'd you over (which had been more for your Interest) to far better Guides, who have written Learnedly and Expresly on this very Theam. Such as are--- *Erasmi Ecclesiastes. He-*

mingii Pastor. *Hyperius de Theologo*.
 And among our selves, To Mr. *Perkins's* Art of Preaching. Bishop *Wilkins's* Gift of Preaching. Mr. *Dodwell's* Letters. Or if these had fail'd you, To some other of the Reverend Clergy of your acquaintance; whose much greater Abilities this way, would have been far more advantageous to your Assistance.

However Relation, prevailing with me beyond Discretion, I have adventured to entrust your Candor with my Sentiments, and best Advices in the present Instance: In which I presume to so much Confidence, that they shall not prove altogether fruitless, if you are but carefull to reduce them into Practice.

And here, for our better proceeding, I shall confine my self, in what I have to say, within the compass of these three general Heads.

First, I shall lay before you (by way of *Prolegomena*) some things which you are to observe before-hand, in order

ter to your better Composing Sermons.

Secondly, I shall next proceed to give you the Directions themselves. And then,

Thirdly, I shall add something, for the better Delivery of them, when Composed.

I. For the *Prolegomena*; or the Things you ought first to mind, before you set about this weighty undertaking; which however they come not into the Art its self, of making Sermons, are yet highly advantageous towards it.

I. The first thing therefore I would advise you to, is seriously to consider, what End you propose to your self in the present Undertaking. I would not blemish your Piety, with the least suspicion, that 'tis only to Qualifie you, for an Employment, whereby you may get a better temporal Livelihood and Subsistence in the world: This ought to be the least of our Design; and to come, in only as the happy consequence of the discharge of our Duty; which

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we ought to pursue with the greatest application, although we knew nothing but contempt and poverty should follow hereupon, as our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles did.

There ought then to be some Nobler aim in it than this; and no less expressly than the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls.

1. The principal End and Aim of all, ought to be the Glory of God. The great *St. Paul* tells us, this should be the design and scope of all our Actions, as well Natural as Moral; *Whether ye eat or drink* (says he) *or whatever ye doe, Do all to the Glory of God.* This was God's end in creating us Men; and this ought to be ours, especially when we take upon us the weighty Function of a Preacher.

2. Another weighty End, we ought in this matter to propose, is the Salvation of those Immortal Souls, for whom the Son of God was pleased to lay down his Life. And this indeed is a *S. Ambrose* very weighty charge--- *Angelicis humeris*

meris formidandum, as said the Father, and yet of great usefulness and advantage. For *he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.* And we have the noblest encouragement to the greatest Industry and faithfulness herein: for that *they who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.* This was the great Design, which the Holy Jesus came into the world upon; and let none of the Sons of Men repute that Employment mean or dishonourable of which the Son of God was.

Dan. 12. 3,

Your great End and Design then, in composing Sermons, must be to win Souls for God; to rescue them out of the Jaws of the Devil; to snatch them out of the flames of Hell, as a Fire-brand out of the burning. When therefore you set about this glorious Enterprise, compose your Discourses so, as may best promote and carry on this grand Design.

2. Another preliminary Direction, in order to this great work is, That you competently furnish your self with the most necessary and usefull Books. Such are the Holy Bible in the Originals (as well as in *English*) together with the Septuagint: in which you ought to be carefull to provide you good Commentators, though not many: But for the present ----- (*Et ob curtam supellectilem*) ----- *Pool's Synopsis Criticorum*, and Dr. *Hammond* on the New Testament, with *Leigh's Critica Sacra* (which how contemptible soever to some, is not unusefull to a Beginner) may be *Instar omnium*. To all which you must necessarily add a good Concordance, whereby you may readily find any place of Holy Scripture, you do but retain a word or two of; the best of which, in its kind, (if you can get it) is Mr. *Newman's*.

But I shan't tarry to recommend the Books to you which may be usefull in this kind; you will find that abundantly done to your hand in that excellent

cellent Tract of Bishop *Wilkins* (which I offer to your perusal) call'd *The Gift of Preaching*. There will you find your self furnish'd, with a very great Choice of Books, in all kinds of Learning becoming a Divine and a Preacher; to which I refer you.

3. There is farther necessary towards this great Work, great Industry and Diligence. When you have those useful and necessary Books I spoke of, you must not keep them (as some do) only to adorn a Shelf, or set forth a Study; but with the busie Moth, you should--*in libris vivere*--and search into the very Bowels of them.

And above all others, would I enforce, on your most diligent Study, that Book of Books, *The Holy Bible*. In our Saviour's Blessed Words---*Ἐξέχετε τὰς γραφάς*---and let not this Sacred Book be ever out of your hands. 'Tis a true observation---*Bonus Theologus est bonus Textarius*; and he that has not the Holy Scriptures at command, is like a Duelist that is unready

at his Weapon. For out of them (as from a well-furnish'd Armory) may you fetch Weapons which are able to repel (dextrously handled) all the fiery Darts of the Devil and his Agents. In-
 somuch we should look on this, as a Book---*Etiam ad verbum Ediscendus*---
 To be learn'd of (if 'twere possible) to the very last word; and you should see, that your Care and Diligence does chiefly spend it self this way.

And truly you ought to remember, that without Diligence, no one ever arrived at perfection, in any Art or Science. But 'tis admirable to think to what strange Degrees of it, that way, some (not very apt Persons neither) have happily advanced. So true is that common Adage--*Labor improbus omnia vincit*---

'Twas the Direction you may remember, and of a Preacher too, (the best but one that ever was in the World)

Eccl. 10.
10.

If the Iron be blunt, put to the greater strength.

You know the Misfortune you lye
 under

under on the Account of your Education (which being none of your Fault, I do not mention it, to aggravate it on you, but to condole it with you) which notwithstanding, ought to have this Influence upon you, as to make you the more assiduous in your Studies, and frequent in the Conversation of sober Learned Men; if possible, that way, to fetch up, what you might more easily have acquired, had God bless'd you with a more advantageous course of Life. However for your Encouragement, there have been many Excellent Preachers, and useful Guides of Souls, who have been no more Partakers of that great Blessing than your self, whose Labours yet praise them in the Gates. Such was the famous Mr. *H.* (as I have heard of *M.* in our own County) Mr. *B.* and divers others.

T'has been often observ'd, that many Persons, of much flatter Parts, and meaner Capacities, by good Culture and diligent Application, have come

Sphinx. c.
9. p. 239.

far to out-strip the much more Pregnant and Forward, that have too much indulg'd themselves in Ease and Laziness. 'Tis a pretty Apologue that of the Snail and Eagle; (one the slowest of all the Reptiles, and the other the swiftest of the feather'd Tribe.) The Snail by continual, tho' slow Progression, wone the Victory from the nimble Eagle, that in Scorn to its Torpitude, loiter'd by the way. But then,

Arist.

4. There is one thing farther, no less necessary to be minded, in order to this great Affair, than any of the former, and that is fervent and continued Prayer. 'Twas an Excellent Motto for a Study-door, which one piously affected,---*Ora & Labora*---And indeed, what the Philosopher said of the Hand, may we say of this useful Duty, that 'tis--*ὄργανον ὄργανον*--'tis that Instrument, which makes all other Instruments. Devotion in the Soul, is like the Master-spring in a Watch; it sets all the other Springs a moving. This is what (thro' the Grace of God) animates

mates our performances, and renders them succesful: without which, all we do, is a going to work in our own strength, and 'twill succeed accordingly.

Prayer is of most powerful Influence, and admirable Effect; I had almost adventured, to call it Omnipotent: For there is hardly any thing impossible to it; it has produced Miracles. Now among all other things, wherein 'tis useful and serviceable to us, I am of the opinion, that 'tis in nothing more so, than in the present Instance of Sermonizing.

Would you then compose a good Sermon? Pray in the beginning; pray in the middle; pray in the Close; pray thro'-out the whole; And I may add, in allusion to that of *Monica* (the Mother of St. *Austin*) 'tis impossible that a Sermon of such Prayers should miscarry. To all which,

Lastly, I have one thing more to subjoin; that you be careful, to be of an Holy Life, and an Exemplary Conversation.

versation. If you would preach well, to the Edification of others, you ought first to be well built up in the Faith your self. For how i't possible, that he should convince another, of the Excellency and Necessity of Holiness and Religion, who all the while disgraces it himself, in unsuitable Walking ?

Besides; Religion in our own Hearts is the best way to invite down the Holy Spirit, for our illuminating other mens; that intellect, which is bemisted with the Steams and Foggs of Vice and Corruption, can very faintly discern the Beauty of that Holiness, which we ought to recommend to others Love and Embraces. That's an admirable Saying, and worthy of our most serious Consideration, that of our Blessed Saviour, *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the Doctrin whether it be of God*; Here lies the true--- *Via Intelligentiæ* : Walk in it, and you shall be--- θεοδιδάκτῳ--- (who is the best Tutour) taught of God.

Joh.7.17.

Now

Now the great Obligation, you are under, hereunto, will appear upon a two-fold Account.

1. Upon the Account of others; that they seeing your good Works, may learn to glorifie our Father which is in Heaven. St. John was, what all, who aspire to this heavenly Calling, ought to be, *A burning and a shining Light.* Joh. 5.35. By the Light of your knowledge, and the Heat of your Zeal, will you the better be able to enkindle the Divine Flames of Love to God and his Truths, in the Breasts of others; which being the great End of your Preaching, and their Hearing, you ought earnestly to endeavour. But then,

2. There is a farther great Obligation on you hereunto, upon your own Account; and that is the dreadful Intimation of the Apostle, *Lest while you Preach to others, you your self should be a Cast-away.* 1 Cor. 9.27. Hence the same Divine Authour gives that seasonable Advice to his Son Timothy----*Ἐπεχρησάτω*---Take heed to thy self and to thy 1 Tim. 4.16.

thy Doctrine: Continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thy self and them that hear thee. Admirable Advice; and such as ought to be written, on all our Breasts, in Letters of Gold. 'Twill be a dreadful time, if when we shall plead, *Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name*--We shall hear that doleful Sentence retorted on us--*Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity.* Which God avert!

Thus have I dispatch'd those things, which I thought fit to offer you, as the *Præcognita*, to this weighty Undertaking; which (you see) are all of that Moment and Consequence, that (du-ly attended) they will much promote, your being an useful Preacher.

2. I proceed now to the Directions themselves, which may be useful for composing Sermons. And here I would have you especially mindful of these three things.

1. The Matter. And,
2. The Method. And,
3. The Expression of your Sermons.

1. Be

I. Be sure, that the Subject matter of your Discourse, be some plain practical Portion of Holy Scripture: which enforces some Duty; or rebukes some Vice. In your handling which, I would advise you to study (what to some vain Sciolists may seem contemptible) Plainness; always speaking (as much as you can) to the Understanding of your Hearers. For when you have done your utmost this way, there will be some or other, that (for want of heed or capacity) won't apprehend you: and better it were that twenty should foolishly upbraid you with Plainness, than for want of it, one poor Soul should go away unedified.

Be sure therefore, especially in a Country Auditory, never attempt to soar up to the Skies, in elaborate Disquisitions, of the inscrutable Mystery of Trinity in Unity; the Filiation of the Second Person; the Hypostatical Union; the Decrees of Absolute Election and Reprobation; or the Deiform

C fund

fund of the Soul. These are things will rather confound, than edifie, and People may be saved, whether they hear learned Lectures of them or no.

You have else, a very large Field to expatiate in; smooth and verdent, spread o're with a rich perfumed Carpet of fragrant Flowers, and beset with fruitful Trees, (whose yeilding Fruit seems to meet you half way,) without venturing your Neck over the Precipices of high Speculations; or having your head scratch'd, by falling into the Abyss of profound thorney Controversies.

What you therefore should choose to insist chiefly on, let it be Faith in Jesus Christ. Repentance from dead Works. God's Love to Man; and Man's Love to God. The infinite Mercy of God towards all contrite Ones; and his inflexible Justice upon the Impenitent. Truth and Honesty. Charity and Goodness. Patience and Contentedness. The *Quatuor Novissima*.
Death,

Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell. These are the chief Points which should exercise your Tongue and your Hearers Ears; contriving to make them, not Learned, but Religious; not Witty, but Wise unto Salvation. And therefore, though you may, I would not have you (but very rarely and upon some extraordinary Occasion) to lard your Discourse, with Ends of Greek and Latin, from Poets, Orators, or Philosophers; which serves to little but Noise and Ostentation.

2. Having thus consider'd the Matter of your Sermons, I come next unto the Method of them: which you should endeavour, that it be logical and perspicuous.

And here (to you) I shall adventure, to be a little more full and particular.

1. Having chosen the Text you intend to insist on, I would not have you begin, with an impertinent

Preface, fetch'd from *Adam*; but fall immediately on the Author, and occasion of the Words; shewing their connexion with, and that dependance they have upon the Context.

When you have so done, and made your way clear and open to your Text, your next business is to divide it. As if it consists of many parts, you may divide it (as 'tis capable) into the several Circumstances of — *Quis, Cujus, Cui, Quid, Ubi, Cur, Quomodo, Quando*. And some there are who choose to discourse (and indeed they do it excellently well) to their Auditory, from these particulars. And this we find was the way of the best Preacher in *England* (in his time) the famous Bishop *Andrews*: Though all Subjects, won't admit of such nice Divisions, nor may they be proper at all times. However I would not you should be over solicitous about it, if they will not. For where the Subject won't cleve handsomely, I would advise you to cast it intirely
into

into a single Proposition or Observation, (or if you see Cause into more than one, as the Practice of our most celebrated Preachers, this day is) and make that the Subject of your following Discourse from the words.

And this (I think) will be your best way of proceeding, both for your own Ease and your Hearer's Advantage: I mean by way of Doctrine and Use. Some Opinionative Sermocinators (I know) seem to slight this Method: but if it be follow'd with that Care and Art, 'tis capable of, it may be found the much more profitable way.

Now I would (at the beginning at least) advise you, to a rough Draught of the General Heads of your Sermon, the first thing you do upon a loose Paper. Onely laying down (as your ingenious Limners do) the first strokes of each particular Part and Member of what you purpose to insist upon, whether by way of Doctrine or Application,

plication, which you may fill up afterward, in fair Notes for the Pulpit.

2. Having thus divided and explain'd your Text according to the Judgment of the best Commentators, the Analogy of Faith, the Scope and Design of the Holy Pen-man, then lay down your Doctrine. Which I would caution you, should flow as naturally, and easily from the words, as is possible, or be clearly implied in them.

When you have so done, you may give a fuller Illustration of it, from some parallel Places of Holy Scripture; which may farther enforce, and set home the weighty Truth upon the Conscience. In which (as in nothing else) I would not have you tedious.

After this, you may go on to enquire into the Ground, on which the Doctrine is founded; and shew, how just and reasonable 'tis, in a few particulars:

culars : which you should beware, that they be distinct, and different one from the other ; and not Co-incident and Tautological, as the manner of some Canters is.

When you have dispatch'd this, if it be needful, you may answer some Objections, which may be urg'd against the Point in hand. But then I would have you to be very cautious in this Matter, that you don't play the young Conjuror, and raise more Spirits, than you are able to allay again. For if you should start Objections, which you don't clearly and fully answer, you will be in danger of doing more harm than good thereby.

Nor ought you to hunt too busily for Arguments and Cavils, against clear fundamental Doctrines. For if so, you will find, that there is nothing so plainly reveal'd, or so positively asserted, but some or other have formed Cavils and Oppositions against it.

Rake

Rake not therefore into the musty Writings of your crabbed Hereticks, or malicious Philosophers (those profess'd Enemies of the Christian Profession) for Arguments against our Religion in general, or any one Article of it in particular: rather let them rot in their own Obscurity, than adventure the Infection of any of your Hearers, by raising them up before them, from their stinking Graves.

However, if there be any weighty Truth in the present times questioned or oppugned, which may prove detrimental to any of your Auditory, and be apt to lead them aside---*Veni-
enti occurrere Morbo*---timely apply a Prevention unto it.

3. Having now dispatch'd the Doctrinal Part of your Discourse, 'twill be time to proceed to (what ought to be the Life of a Sermon) the Application of it. And this prudently manag'd, may be variously useful according

according to the Apostle, *For Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.* ^{2 Tim. 3. 16.}

Now (as I said before) I would not have you put the Holy Scripture on the Rack, by Torture to force it to speak of your side, what it does not intend. Nor would I have you to pull in Inferences and Corrolaries, which are not genuine and pertinent. All Doctrines are not capable of the same Improvement, in the several Parts of Application. Those that will admit on't, may be improved all, and every one, by some or other of these ways.

1. For the Information of the Judgment, and improving the Understanding of your Hearers. From the Point in hand, you may take occasion of confuting prevailing Errours, and of instructing them in necessary Truths; or the divers Instances of Duty, which they might not know, or know so well before.

D

Or

Or if they did, 'twill be for their advantage, that their Memories (lubrious and slippery as they are) should be refresh'd and cherish'd; by bringing back to 'em such serious Truths, as may have slipt them; or by planting them the deeper into them, if they are there already. Or,

2. If this may not flow thence so naturally, the Point in hand, may be useful for Reproof: especially if it be levell'd, against any open notorious Vice, be it what it will; as Swearing, Drunkennels, Adultery, or the like. If it be Sin, which the Doctrin you are handling condemns, (especially if it be the raging Sin of the Times or of the Place) be sure to rebuke it openly, and smite it under the fifth Rib.

But then you are to do it with caution; you must not so urge your Reproof, as it shall openly discriminate a particular Offender, and expose him to the publick Congregation: lest instead of gaining and converting, you lose

lose at once a Hearer and a Friend. Such Reproofs as are personal and particular, require a very private and prudent Menagery ; lest they prove fruitless, and recoil also to your own Damage. *But for the sin it self, that* Tit. 1. v. *can't be too cuttingly Rebuked, and* ^{13.} *therefore spare it not.* Or,

3. If the Point mayn't be so fit for Reproof, it may be for Consolation ; which may be branch'd into divers particulars, according to the Nature of it. And this Inference will most chiefly come in, when we handle any gracious Promise, of what kind soever ; either of being deliver'd from any Evil, present or to come ; or of enjoying any good here or hereafter. According to the Nature of the Comfort which the Subject yeilds, so ought it to be applyed.

And indeed, this must necessarily affect your own heart with comfort, if you can bring Refreshment to any weary Soul ; if you can give them

Isa. 61. v. *Beauty for Asbes, the Oyl of Joy for Mourning, and the Garment of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness.* This is the great Office our Blessed Saviour came to execute; and 'tis the Priviledge and Duty of all the Ministers of the Gospel of Peace (as they can) to do so too. Or else,

4. If it be not so proper for Consolation, it may be useful for the Trial and Examination of the State and Condition of the Auditory. As, 1. Thus, if you are discoursing against any Sin, laying open the Mischief and Danger of it, you may (to good advantage) put them upon the Examination of their own Consciences, whether they are guilty of it or no; which may be doubly useful to 'em.

1. To bless the Grace and Mercy of God, if it be not. And,

2. To implore his Grace and Assistance against it, if it be.

Or

Or else, 2. If you are in your Doctrin recommending any Duty or Virtue, enforcing the Weightiness and Necessity of it, your People can't be better employed, than to be put upon a strict Enquiry into the State of their Souls, whether it be there or no. That they may bless God, if in any Measure it be so ; or timely endeavour the obtaining and securing of it, if it be not.

Lastly, Or else in the last place, it may be profitable for Exhortation, to stir up People to a conscientious Practise of their Duty ; in doing which, lies the great Excellency and Commendation of a Preacher. Infomuch, your great Business here, is to prevail with them to embrace the present Duty, and to live up to it in their Conversations ; without which, your Pains, and theirs too, will be to very little purpose.

Now there are two things, which usually and usefully come in here, into this Part of the Application ; and they are,

I. Di-

1. Directions for the better enabling your Auditory to perform the Duty.

2. Motives to incite them and engage them to it.

1. For the Directions: When you are pressing the Necessity of any Grace or Virtue, it may be very profitable, if you take occasion to lay before them, the best Rules you can think of, whereby they may be enabled to acquire it. Or if you are declaiming against any prevailing Temptation, 'twill be very advantageous to present them such brief Assistances, whereby they may be empowered to vanquish and overcome it.

The general Directions, to both which, are these;

1. A faithful and diligent Attendance on the Means of Grace, such as are,

1. Hearing Sermons. 2. Reading the Holy Scriptures and other good Books. 3. A constant conscientious

tious frequenting the Lord's Supper.

And, 4. A Pious adhering to the Society of Godly and Religious Christi-

ans ; *Out of whose Mouth no corrupt Communication proceeds, but that which is good to the use of edifying, ministring Grace unto the Hearers.* Ephes. 14. 29.

2. To this may you advise them, to add diligent Prayer, constant Prayer, fervent Prayer. *In that every good Gift, and every perfect Gift cometh down from above,* we ought to send our Prayers up thither for it. And we have good encouragement upon our lack of Wisdom to ask it of God, who giveth to all Men liberally ; and for that he has said we shall have it. Jam. 1. 5. 17.

So much for those general Heads of Direction, which you may enlarge on (*Pro re natâ*) as you see occasion. When you have dispatch'd these, you may in the next Place, proceed on,

2. To the Motives ; which you ought to see, that they be Ponderous
and

and Cogent. If the Point in hand enforces any weighty Duty, or dissuades from any dangerous Vice, you may do well to back it with such serious Arguments, as may engage and prevail with your Hearers, to embrace the one, and decline the other.

And this is what will afford you a very large Compass to walk in; for there are divers Topicks, from whence you may fetch your Motives, according to the Nature of the thing in hand; whether it be a good to be followed: or an Evil to be avoided.

r. If it be a Good which your Subject leads you to perswade 'em to embrace, you have all the Excellencies of Goodness lying before you from whence to enforce it. As,

Utile,
Bonum, { Honestum,
{ Facundum.

From whence you may insist upon the Profitableness, the Pleasantness, and the Honesty or Honourableness of the

the Duty in hand, to enforce it upon the Practice of your Auditors. But then,

2. If it be an Evil you would dissuade from ; how many Circumstances are there, by which you may discourage it, and take People off from it, in the Consideration of Evil ? That 'tis opposite and contrary to Goodness in all the Attributes of it. That 'tis,

Inutile,

Inhonestum,

Injucundum.

Neither profitable, Nor honest, Nor pleasant. Or else more positively, that 'tis,

Malum in se,

Malum in effectis,

Malum Corporale,

Malum Spirituale,

Malum Temporale,

Malum Aeternum.

Infomuch you are here furnish'd with a rich Magazine of Arguments, when you would dehort from any
E
Evil ;

Evil; and that must needs be a very barren empty Brain, which can't enlarge on such Heads as these.

Thus have I (*ὡς ἐν τῷ πρῶτῳ*) propos'd you my Thoughts, in relation to the Method, which you may (I hope) advantageously follow, in your composing Sermons. I don't say, That in all of them, you should strictly tye your self, to every one of these particulars: It may (in some of them) be very improper and incongruous if you should. Onely pursue those in your Discourses, which the Subject in hand most naturally leads you to, without force or straining.

For I would not have you strive to be prolix upon any Subject, as if your Business were to exhaust it. Nor to dwell too long upon a Text; which among the meaner sort of your Auditory, is apt to create a Nauseam; they being ready to take it for the same Sermon still, if you have the same Text, they usually remembering but little more than that.

Nor

Nor do I hold it the prudentest Course (however the giddy Rabble may sometimes pretend they admire it) to run your Sermon into too tedious a Length. Lest like Gold, it be beaten and extended so long and thin, that it can't be felt, and you onely tyre instead of edifying your Hearers. For few Peoples Zeal and Attention, will be able to keep pace with a protracted Harangue; and when once they grow weary, the best Discourse in the World, will soon become pall'd and insipid.

I would not therefore advise you, (ordinarily) to exceed the usual Compass of an Hour; rather short of than beyond it, including both your Prayer and Sermon. I remember to have read, that the Pious and Learned Bishop *Sanderſon*, was for Sermons, that should not exceed the third or fourth Part of an Hour. But such a petite Contraction, may be no less scandalous on the other hand; some People being apt to measure the Preacher's Zeal and Ability, by the length of his

*In his Life
by Mr.
Walton.*

Sermon. What therefore, you may safely follow in this Matter, is that advice of the Poet, you are no stranger to,

Ovidii
Met.

——— *Nec te spectare Booten,
Nec Helicon Jubeo. Medio tutissimus ibis.*

To all which I have to add, under this General, onely a brief View of those Advantages, which will accrew from that clear and plain Method, I have been recommending both to your Auditory, and to your self.

I. To your Auditory; they will the better understand and remember what is laid before them, in so perspicuous a Method, when they are instructed by Doctrin, Reason and Use, (it being what generally they have been inured to) they will the better apprehend and retain those weighty Duties thus deliver'd; which is what will best conduce unto their Practices, the Principle thing design'd. For how can they practice unless they understand? And
how

how shall they be able to understand, unless things are laid before them, in a clear and distinct Method?

2. A good Method will be useful (most of all) unto your self. For while your Thoughts and Notions float confusedly in the Brain, they are like Gold in the Oar, there's little use or profit of them. Or they may be resembled to this Beauteous Fabrick, and Contexture of things, the World which we now see, as it lay in the Womb of the *Chaos*. Or like a Chicken in the Egg; it lies confused within the Shell, until the Plastick virtue by the warmth of the Hen, actuates every Homogeneous Particle, into its proper Part and Member, to the forming of a perfect Animal.

Though you should have most rich and curious Notions in the Brain, yet would they prove very little useful, until Art and Method digested them into Form and Order, and gave to every one of them its proper Place and Office.

Office. When there is a clear Logical Scheme laid down, no Luxuriant but an ordinary Invention, an indifferent Memory with a tolerable Judgement, will easily supply you (by God's Blessing) with Matter sufficient to fill it up. And thus I have dispatch'd the Method of composing Sermons.

3. There is one thing more, which I promised to consider in making Sermons, and that is the Expression of them. And indeed there is great care to be observ'd in this, as well as in the other Instances. And the rather, for that some for want of it, or if you will, for using too much about it, (as it may be thought) have render'd themselves and their Discourses ridiculous and contemptible. I mean such as strain for hard Words, and strong Lines; high and flanting Language; a *Romantick Rodomontada* Style, no way becoming the Pulpit, or the House of God. This is what I would therefore advise you industriously to avoid, and let your Endeavour be,

I. Tha

1. That your Words be plain; *i. e.* intelligible and easie to be understood by the meanest Hearers. For all that is beyond that, is utterly lost upon them.

But when I recommend Plainness to you, I would not be thought to promote your vending of trivial, crude, indigested Expression; or to encourage you, in the Use of any homely, unseemly, Slip-stocking Similitudes, which some, unhappily have utter'd to their own Disparagement, and the Blush of the Auditory. Whatever you offer of that kind, be sure it be grave, and becoming the Mouth of God, whom you represent in that Place.

You may observe, how much our Blessed Saviour Himself, was pleas'd to express Himself in Parables and Similitudes unto the People: *Without a* Matt. 13. *Parable spake he not unto them, Says* 34. *St. Matthew.* But then they were all very pertinent and serious; and apt to leave the deeper Impression on the Minds of those that heard them.

And

And indeed, this is the true End and Use of Speech, (and that is always best which does most effectually promote it) to carry our Notion and Sense of things, to the Apprehension and Understanding of those we discourse to. And therefore such words ought we to find out, and take unto our selves, which may prove *as Goats,* and *as Nails fastened by the Masters of Assemblies.* Which leads me on, in the

Ecclef. 12.
11.

2d. Place, To advise you to see farther, that your Expression be Pathetical and Impressive; apt to enter upon the Hearts and Consciences of your Hearers. There are Tongues that are sharp as Raifors, and Words that can prick to the very heart; and tho' that be as hard, as was *Actius* his Whetstone, yet the Raifor of the Tongue may cut it asunder.

Act. 2. 37.
Actius
Navius
Lud. vii.
in St Aug.
De civil.
Dei l. 10.
c. 16.

Now that they may have in them, that *πάθος*, which may be wish'd, let your Expressions favour of your own

own Soul : If you would have them incite others Passions, let them most of all move your own. Would you have your Congregation deeply affected at what you say ? Be deeply affected with those things first your self. If you would have them melt others, let them (before hand) melt your own heart. Steep them first in your own Tears, and then they won't fail to draw Tears from others ; ——— *Si St. Jerom. vis me flere, dolendum est primo tibi ;* Said one of the Fathers.

We see how apt one is to laugh, barely for seeing another laugh ; and to weep, only for seeing another weep. Though I would not have you think, that I am recommending onely a Theatrical Mourning or would set you up to act a Threning, Whining Tone, without Sense or Feeling ; (which I know would prove fulsome and ridiculous to the Discreeter part of the Congregation) yet where this Passion proceeds from true Affection, and a zealous Mind, and a deep Sense of

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the weighty Affairs in hand, it may be very useful and of good effect, to the Speaker and Hearers too. Those certainly, are like to prove the most impressive Discourses, when the Heart is touch'd with a Feeling of the Truth we utter; and we may be said to speak from the Heart to the Hearts of our Hearers.

Lastly, That your Words may be the more Pungent, see that they be truly Pious, and (as much as conveniently can be) in the Language of the Holy Scriptures. For we may be sure, these will be most pleasing to God, and most acceptable to all good Men. And in truth, what better Language can the Holy Oracles of God be spoken in, than that wherein they were deliver'd? I mean, as near as they can be translated, into the English Idiom.

And 'tis not incongruous to believe, that the Holy Spirit (which makes

Heb. 4.12. *his Word quick and powerful, and sharper*

per than any Two-edged Sword, to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow) will render his own Language, most effectual to the Edification of Souls.

But there is one Abuse this way, I would here caution you against; and that is an improper and impertinent bringing in Scripture-Expressions, as the manner of some is, (as we use to say) without Fear or Wit. So it be Scripture, they think 'tis all well enough (as indeed 'tis with ignorant Hearers) how forraign soever it be to the Matter in hand. Which I look upon, instead of honouring, to be a profaning of the Sacred Writings; and in the Place of right using, to be a gross abusing of them. For they ought not to be thrown out rashly, and beside the Matter in hand; nor unnecessarily multiplied, to one and the same purpose; but with great Choice and Judgment applyed, for the Conviction of the Disobedient, and the Build-

Ep. Jude
v. 20.

ing up the Just, on their most Holy Faith. And even when your Words are not in Scripture-Phrase, be sure they be agreeable thereto, in the Piety and signification of them.

But then there is one thing farther I would advise you of; and that is to see, when they are not Scripture, that your Words and Expressions be your own; *i. e.* I would here have you beware of the Sin of Plagiarism: For if once you use your self to walk by others Crutches, you will never be able to go well without 'em. And if any Malevolent Captious Hearer present be able to trace you out, you will be undone in point of Reputation: there being nothing generally more scandalous, than to see one Pride himself (with *Aesop's* Chough) in the furtive Gallantry of other Men's Labours.

Although I would not have you think neither, that Books, when they are purchas'd at a dear rate, are to be kept to no Use, or read to no Profit.

No,

No, I intend no such thing: but that you ought to know how to use them aright; *i. e.* you should do by your Books, as the industrious Bee does by the fragrant Flowers; not crop them off whole and intire, and so carry them away to her Hive, (this were a Robbery not to be endured:) But by her kissing Chymistry, (as one words it) she onely extracts the Virtue and Quintessence of them, and turns it into a delicate Juice for the Refreshment of her self and others. Or if you will, you should digest your Books, as you do your Meat; which you don't swallow by the Joynt, but by the Bitt; which you so chew and masticate for the Stomach, that it may easily concoct into Chyle, to the strengthening and nourishing the whole Body.

I remember a Learned and Ingenious Person in Discourse, told me once, that 'twas a very easie thing to Preach (*i. e.* as to the Matter of the Sermon) as well as the best Preacher in
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England. At which I being very much surpriz'd, (as you may think) and big with expectation, I desired him to oblige me so far, as to impart to me this most excellent Secret. He told me, 'twas by reading the best Sermons, and making them our own, by digesting them into our proper Reason and Understanding; and when we had done so, we might easily cloath them, in our own Language and Expression, so as they should not be known, ever to have belong'd to any other Person. I confess this looks pretty; and it may have something in it may deserve a serious Consideration. For the ripening our Judgments, and the enriching our Understandings by various Readings, is the great End of our Studies, and comes not within this Statute of Felony. And so much shall suffice also as to the Expression of your Sermons.

3dly, and *Lastly*, There is only one thing more remaining to be spoken to, and that is, that I add something for the better delivery of them, when made.

And indeed, This is what should exercise, not the smallest share of your Care and Pains: In that the Gesture and Carriage of a Preacher, in the Delivery of his Sermons, has no inconsiderable Influence on the Affections of his Auditory. And it has sometimes been observ'd, that a round and graceful Delivery, has render'd plausible and taking, a very thin and ordinary Discourse. As was that, whereof our most renowned Queen *Elizabeth* gave this Character, that 'twas the best she ever heard, and the worst she ever read in her Life.

Sith this therefore has no mean Operation on the Hearers Minds, either for the Raising their Attention, or flattering their Devotion, the much greater Heed and Observation ought
to

to be applyed hereunto; in which also, I am willing to afford you my best Assistance.

Now you are to know, in this Matter there are two Extreame, which are carefully to be avoided.

1. A dull, heavy, stupid Carriage; as if the Preacher were but of one Piece with his Pulpit; and had no more Life and Spirit in him, than those Statues or Pillars that adorn or support it.

And truly 'tis not at all strange, that a Sleepy-Preacher, should have a drowfie Auditory: and that his People should have no warmth of Affection, when he himself has no Heat of Zeal.

It should therefore be the Care, as 'tis the Concern of a Preacher, to enliven himself and his Discourse what he can; for that, 'tis so very necessary to invigorate the Congregation, into a more lively Attention, on the important Duty in hand. But then,

2. There

2. There is an Extream no less to be avoided on the other side ; and that is all Antick and Frantick actions and Motions in the Pulpit. As Leaping, Ducking, Raving, Tossing the Head, Throwing the Arms, as if your Business there were to act a Mad-man, instead of delivering the sober Truths of the Gospel. And this is a Practice, the Romish Priests beyond Sea, are observ'd to be very guilty of : from whom (as they have many other things of a like precious Value) we may suppose our Fanatick Holders-forth (many of them) have derived the like Deportment here at home.

I would not be thought here to discourage, but promote a sincere, and fervent Zeal; as I ought to do in a Matter of such Moment and Consequence. But then, let it vent and express it self, with that Prudence and Sobriety, as becomes the

G Gravity

Gravity of the Pulpit, and the Dignity of our High Calling. And therefore be sure, that your Tone, Look, and Carriage, be Reverend and Modest, full of Life and Zeal; without any Mimical Gesticulations, or frightful Boations; as remembring, that God is not always in the great and strong Winds, that rent the Mountains, nor in the most loud and blustering Noise, but in the *still small Voice*. There being such Harmony in a well-tuned Voice, you should endeavour to compose yours to such a Melting, but unaffected Tone, as might insinuate it self (like the Charms of Musick) with Delight and Pleasure into the Ears of the Assembly.

1 Kings
19. 12.

And then for your Eye too; it might be of Excellent Advantage, if that could still be fix'd intent upon the Congregation. For that, when they take notice, you see and observe them, and are continually surveigh-
ing

ing of them, 'twill make them the more awful and attentive. And the Beams too (in the Heat of your Zeal) that may issue thence, may contribute something towards the enflaming their Affections.

But if you would arrive at this so happy an Accomplishment, it will be very necessary you should have a good Memory; with warm Affections, and a ready Elocution; whereby you would never be at a loss, either for pertinent Matter, or apt and proper Words to express it. And then when you command this Readiness, you may (as 'twas said of one) *Dominari in concionibus*---indeed.

'Tis I know (especially to some Men) a mighty Laborious Task, to learn a Sermon *Memoriter*; and to be able to deliver it roundly without Book: He that can do so,

— *Erit Magnus Apollo.*

But all Men can't pretend unto this Talent, though some there be that can.

But then there are others, who when they have gotten a Sermon by heart, yet are seen to deliver it with that Timidity and Unreadiness, (as some School-boys do their Lessons, fearing they shall be out) that it rather afflicts, than affects their Audience; and the more judicious Part of it, are in pain for them all the while they are in the Pulpit.

What therefore I would advise you, (in order to your better Delivery of it) is always to write your Sermons at large; but unless it be for a while at first, not to tye your self to the Slavery of Words. For when you have your Sermon ready before you; 'tis a great Encouragement, in that upon all Interruptions (which
the

the most Learned Eloquent Preacher in the World may be obnoxious to) you may have recourse thither for Relief.

But then you need not so straitly to oblige your self to Words and Syllables, as that upon the least Omission or Mistake of one of them, you must necessarily be out ; but study matter and things ; and endeavour to get such a supply of them treasured up in your Mind, that upon no Emergency, you may be in danger of being at a Loss : but may be able to go on, to discourse usefully and piously to the Congregation, although it be not in the same Words, written in your Notes.

Which that you may the better do, revolve in your Thoughts, before you go into the Pulpit, what may properly and coherently be spoken (*Memoriter*) under the several Heads before you, besides what you have in your Papers. And
when

when you are well furnish'd with a good Stock of Matter, Words will naturally offer themselves apt and proper enough for its Delivery. And if you accustom your self to this way awhile, you will comfortably experiment, what a Promptitude use will administer in this Matter.

Thus I have (weakly and imperfectly enough) discharg'd my Promise, if not answer'd your Expectation. Shall you (or any other) receive any Benefit thence, I desire (as is most due) that God may have all the Glory, and I the Benefit of your hearty Prayers.

Now that these Directions may not prove altogether unserviceable to you in this your grand Undertaking, let me beg this of you in Relation to them, that you would not too cursorily look them over, and then as carelessly throw them aside as soon as that is done: But that you would read them with Deliberation;

liberation; and practise them with
 Conscience and Prudence. And then,
 that God will make you a good
 Minister of Jesus Christ, and a *Work-*
man, that needeth not to be asha-
med, rightly dividing the Word of
Truth, is the Hope, or (at least)
 shall be the very hearty Prayer of,

Your Affectionate

Servant,

J. P.

F I N I S.